

NURTURE OUR GIFTS AND GROWTH

~ By Beth Wolfers-Community Leader

The word 'gift' comes up a lot in L'Arche. It is in the fabric of who we are. Part of our Mission is 'to make known the gifts of people with disabilities' and, one of our core values it to 'Nurture our Gifts and Growth'. Lofty goals indeed!

Eileen is a master of noticing and appreciating the gifts of others. Eileen notices, and by doing so, the gifts of those around her become known. Her appreciation of these gifts, nurtures them in others. She teaches me that noticing takes time, attention, and for me to be present to the people around me. She teaches me to share with others my appreciation of their gifts with the gentle reminder, 'How will they know if no one tells them?' Eileen is a woman of wisdom, one of her many gifts.

Negativity isn't hard to find. We hear about challenging situations in the news, read negative comments on social media accounts, or create them as we criticize those around us. I know that there is much that needs to change to create a just world. We can't hide from the problems around us, but, what if we imagined it differently? What if we, like Eileen, started with the gift?

When I start from the place of a gift, it opens me up and I can see new possibilities. Starting at the gift allows growth that builds on the good that already exists. It puts the richness, compassion, and joy of the world foremost in my vision, and I can imagine differently.

In the next little while, I ask that you take a moment to follow Eileen's example. Notice the gift of someone in your life and name this gift to them. It might be a bit awkward at first as doing this is a skill that needs to be practiced and Eileen has been practicing for over seven decades. How does this moment of notice and nurture change your day, their day?

Thank you, Eileen, for the teacher you are to me!



COMMUNITY...NOW MORE THAN EVER

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN L'ARCHE AND STFX SERVICE LEARNING
~ By Arlyne McGrath - Service Learning Centre Community Coordinator
and a L'Arche Antigonish Board Member

The past few years of pandemic living have presented unique challenges for everyone. One of the biggest collective learnings we had as a society was the absolute necessity we have as a species to connect in a meaningful way. We were creative during the lockdowns, doing online fitness classes, and having Zoom chats and meetings. This was an excellent option given the circumstances. But, as time went on, a fatigue set in, for me, and many others. I missed seeing people - in person. All the small talk we do on the sides of events is lost, and some things just don't transfer to the screen. In my work as the Community Engagement Lead with StFX Service Learning, I felt this missing connection, and so did the students. They were hungry for community connection. Fortunately, around this time, community partners started welcoming students in person again, and placements with L'Arche were again a possibility.

The Service-Learning staff relationship with L'Arche is strong; a foundation built over years of collaboration and collective joy. But what about the students who had experienced a L'Arche placement in previous years? What had they taken away from the experience? I sent out a mass email, not sure what I would get in return, but almost immediately, I started receiving incredible, moving responses from former L'Arche Service-Learning students. They told me how powerful the L'Arche experience was for them, and how it has continued to influence their actions, choices, and career paths after graduation. Many still think about the core members they worked with daily.



The goal of Service-Learning is for community partners and students to build a reciprocal relationship. Every single student who replied clearly described a reciprocal and often transformational relationship with L'Arche and the people they met there. This is building community. In a time where so much is dividing people, in a time where many of us choose isolation by constantly checking our phones instead of engaging with those around us, L'Arche Core Members and staff show the students the joy of building community and the importance of listening to everyone's voice in a non-judgmental way. It is testimonials like these that bring joy to my heart and make my job meaningful. It is not an understatement to say that a placement with L'Arche can change someone's life. I look forward to seeing the results of the synergy created by L'Arche and Service Learning in the years to come.



MEET OUR ARTISTS

Lisa Leuschner

I like to dance, drum, weave and paint. I like it. I'm happy when I paint. I think of water and waves when I paint. It feels good that people see my art.



Regis MacDonald

I've been drawing all my life. I used to doodle all over the edges of my scribbler in school. Waterscapes, seascapes and landscapes, mostly right out of my head. If you're doing someone else's artwork, you aren't doing your own.

I heard lots of music growing up. I like Irish and Scottish best, something that tells a story.



THE GIFT

~ By Natalie Cameron -Program Coordinator



What a thrill it was for our community to be able to act again at the Bauer Theater. It had been four years since we were last on the stage, and it was a wonderful start to the Christmas season to perform *The Gift - The Journey of the 4th Wise Woman*. Lisa waited a long time to fill the role of the 4th wise woman, as we originally thought we would have the play in 2022, she was very patient over the year but as the time drew nearer, she helped grow everyone's anticipation!

Everyone works so hard to get to the opening night. Creation of acts starts months in advance with people practising and adapting often right up until the final rehearsal. We dig through our costumes to find the right outfits or visit the op shop to find a hidden gem, over lunch at the programs we listen to lots of music, celebrating when we find the right piece, everyone starting to effervesce with ideas. The musicians gather their sheet music, selecting the right key for the carols and the narrator reviews the script, making tweaks so the story will flow.

Being at the Bauer Theater is a magical time for me. From hearing a piece of music months or even years in advance, getting the seed of an idea and watching it unfold until the final performance on opening night, the assistants who are nervous to say 'yes' to performing on stage but take a chance and end up loving the experience. The hum of from the audience as they find their seats waiting with expectation and hope for what they are about to witness to being backstage in the wings waiting with an act about to go on, their nerves and excitement glowing in the dim light.

I am eternally grateful for all the performers and everyone backstage and behind the scenes who make the play happen and come to life, the many volunteers, the assistants who support people backstage or at home, Murray Gibson who creates our beautiful posters and slideshow, the audience members who come and join our circle and sing together and to all the artists who bring to life the many acts of the play. Our community has come to cherish this time, creating together and the play helps us build community in a new way and has become the highlight for many at Christmas time!



DANCING TOGETHER: A MILLION DREAMS

~ by Tina Angustia and Lisa Leuschner -The Studio



Lisa and I have been dancing together for many years. Each time, we are amazed at how excited we are from the beginning till the end. From the moment we were sure we had dates booked at The Bauer Theater, after being on hiatus due to Covid and other reasons, we were delighted to know that it was finally happening again. From this moment tedious process of creating a dance begins. Which song, charting the choreography, looking for costumes, practicing and finally performing in front of our family and friends.

We sat down together to reflect on those two performances in December and here are some of our thoughts.

Lisa: I love dancing! I like dancing together. Me and you. I like my dress. I liked the part where I danced in a new dress (towards) the end of the dance. I looked wow! It's nice. I will do it again.

Tina: It is a privilege dancing with you Lisa. I am so happy to share the stage with you. And I love it when we create the dance and start practicing. Sometimes, the movement does not come to us so quickly but somehow, it flows like how we imagine it to be! Yes, I will do it again too!

We both agree that dancing together gives us so much joy. We get a little nervous before every show, but when we are on stage, all we can think of is cherishing what we can do together as artists and friends. Movement can tell a story and can bring hope to the people who come to watch us during our play. We are grateful to be able to get the chance to show you how magical the art of dance can be.



Community Gallery!



A YEAR OF JOY

~ BY NICOLE ROBERTS - CORE MEMBER AT HOPE HOUSE
WITH HELP BY ANA ANTON - ASSISTANT AT HOPE HOUSE



Nicole moved to L'Arche Antigonish in January 2023 and this past year she's been involved in all aspects of life in the community. She values her relationships and finds meaning in helping others. She is empathetic, caring, and a valued member of our community. She loves going to Church and helps with the house chores. Nicole busy schedule and does many activities, such as: working at Sobeys, Cleves, CACL, attending the L'Arche Day Programs, fundraising, our Christmas play, hockey and Special Olympics. She also loves to sing, watch musicals, go for long walks and jogging. Nicole attended the Annual Community retreat, and she enjoyed being surrounded by people. She is also a great friend, housemate, daughter and an exceptional human being.

Q. Nicole, you've been with L'Arche for one year, do you wish to tell us how you joined L'Arche?

A. When I came here, David was here I was at Parkland with Mom and Dad and then I came here to L'Arche. I talked to David, and he is so nice and everything.

Q. Can you tell people something about yourself? Tell people who is Nicole.

A. Myself, I think I did a good job and then I like to help Megan, Natalie, and Kris.

Q. If you think about your first year in L'Arche what can you say?

A. Well, I liked it. I like being here.

Q. Do you like living here?

A. Yes, I like the staff, to help them, do cleaning and help the people. I could help you guys out and talk to you and go for a walk and go get coffee and you are my friends and could go for a drive.

Q. How do you spend your weekends?

A. Well, I do cleaning, and do the garbage, sweep the floors, clean the windows, and do all that. And shovelling snow, baking, and helping the assistants in the house.

Q. How do you have fun in L'Arche?

A. Meet my friends and talk to them at gatherings and prayers and singing, being in the play, do yoga, exercises and stretches.

Q. What don't you like about L'Arche?

A. I like L'Arche.

Q. What would you tell people to do more if you had a chance?

A. Tidy up your room, do the garbage, sweep the floors and tidy up in the kitchen.

Q. What is your dream, Nicole?

A. To bake.

DONATION WISHLIST

- Picture frames
- Canvases of all sizes
- Outdoor games - Washer toss, bean bag games, croquet, etc.
- Life Vests/Jackets
- Bikes
- Deck chairs, bench or swing
- Adult coloring books
- Yarn and embroidery floss
- Clothes drying Rack
- Heavy duty blender
- Arm chair
- House Plants
- Knife Set
- Acrylic paints
- Small digital camera
- Sketch pads



DID YOU KNOW...?

Did you know that you can donate directly on our website and be issued an immediate tax receipt to your e-mail?

Donating online is easy, and you can set up recurring monthly donations! This type of dependable income can help tremendously towards our sustainability and growth!



Community Highlights!



Please also visit our website at www.larcheantigonish.ca

